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- **Huxel, Shawn Thayer**
Lakehurst, New Jersey 08733 (US)
- **Vyakarnam, Murty Narayan**
Edison, New Jersey 08817 (US)
- **Datta, Arindam**
Hillsborough, New Jersey 08876 (US)
- **Yuan, Jie Jenny**
Bridgewater, NJ 08807 (US)

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(71) Applicant: **INDIGO MEDICAL, INCORPORATED**
Cincinnati Ohio 45242 (US)

(74) Representative: **Mercer, Christopher Paul**
Carpmaels & Ransford
43, Bloomsbury Square
London WC1A 2RA (GB)

(72) Inventors:
• **Cooper, Kevin Leonard**
Warren, New Jersey 07059 (US)

(54) **Coiled multi-component polymer implant**

(57) There is described a process for deploying a medical construct in a body cavity, so as to function for example as a stent in a body lumen. The construct is used by forming a coil from a strand that has an interior and an exterior portion, and thereafter heating while expanding the coil so as to melt only the exterior portion.

When that melted portion resolidifies with the coil in the expanded state, the coil's integrity and resistance against forces such as compression is maintained by the unmelted but stretched interior portion, and the expanded shape is maintained by the adhesiveness of the solidified exterior portion.

Description

Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to a method of deploying a stent having interior and exterior portions with different melting temperatures.

Background of the Invention

[0002] There has been a need to replace metallic stents with those formed from biodegradable materials. However, any such replacement needs to maintain the advantages of metallic stents, that is, the strength and resistance against compressive forces that tend to re-close the lumen opened by the stent.

[0003] It is known to provide biodegradable thermoplastic stents that are deployed by heating the plastic until it softens, and then expanding the softened stent until it achieves a desired diameter, such as that of the body lumen in which it is inserted. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,670,161 discusses a tubular stent so processed, as well as (in column 2) prior art tubular stents in Beck et al, U.S. Patent No. 5,147,385. Particularly as to the latter, it explains that the '385 stent is heated above its melting temperature (the polymer "enters a liquid phase in the [deployment] temperature that Beck discloses"), and hence "improved strength characteristics using the stent described by Beck is limited". The solution of the '161 patent is to use a copolymer of the Beck homopolymer, the copolymer having melting temperatures that greatly exceed the deployment heating temperature so that there is no melting of the copolymer stent.

[0004] Thus, the trend as shown by the '161 patent is to avoid melting a tubular thermoplastic stent when it is deployed by heating and expanding it, as this weakens the strength properties of the stent. That is, the entire plastic tube of the '385 patent melts, thus losing its integrity and its inherent strength. However, the "solution" of requiring only the use of a copolymer is one that is undesirable due to the limited ability to resist compressive forces in any new expanded form. There has been a need, therefore, to provide a process of using a thermoplastic stent by heating and expanding, that is not limited just to single materials but which retains the strength properties of, e.g., copolymers.

Summary of the Invention

[0005] We have designed a process which satisfies the above-noted needs. That is, the invention is based upon the realization that it is possible to construct a coil stent from a strand that has an interior and an exterior portion, the two portions having two different melting temperatures and, thereafter, heating while expanding the coil so as to melt only the exterior portion. When that melted portion resolidifies with the coil in the expanded

state, the coil's integrity and resistance against forces such as compression is maintained by the unmelted but expanded interior portion, and the expanded shape is maintained by the adhesiveness of the solidified exterior portion.

[0006] More specifically, in accord with one aspect of the invention there is provided a method of delivering and deploying a medical construct in a body cavity, comprising the steps of:

- a) providing a medical construct comprising a strand wound into a coil, the strand comprising an interior portion that has a melting temperature T_{mi} and an exterior portion that comprises a biodegradable, biocompatible polymer having a melting temperature T_{me} , the melting temperatures being greater than body temperatures; the coil having a longitudinal axis and an outside diameter less than that of the body cavity;
- b) inserting the medical construct into the body cavity and moving the medical construct to a deployment position within the cavity;
- c) deploying the medical construct by heating it to a deployment temperature that exceeds T_{me} but not T_{mi} so as to melt the exterior portion but not the interior, and expanding the outside diameter radially until the diameter approximates the interior diameter of the body cavity; and
- d) allowing the deployed medical construct to cool while expanded, so that the outer portion that has melted at the deployment temperature, fuses at least a portion of the coil together at the body cavity temperature at the expanded diameter, thereby increasing the coil's resistance to any shear forces applied to the coil parallel to the axis, and to compressive forces applied transversely to the axis.

[0007] In accord with another aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of forming a tubular stent in situ in a body lumen, comprising the steps of:

- a) inserting into the lumen a construct comprising a coil formed by wrapping a strand about an axis, the coil being narrower in diameter than the inside diameter of the lumen;
- b) heating the coil to a temperature sufficient to melt only the outside surface of the strand but not the strand portion inside the surface;
- c) expanding the coil while still at the temperature until its diameter approximates that of the lumen; and
- d) cooling the coil so as to solidify the melted surface portion while the coil is expanded, so that the coil solidifies into a tube.

[0008] Accordingly, it is an advantageous feature of the invention that a plastic coil stent can be deployed by expanding it at a temperature that melts outer portions

of the stent, without sacrificing and indeed while enhancing mechanical strength properties.

[0009] Other advantageous features will become apparent upon reference to the following Detailed Description, when read in light of the attached drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0010]

Fig. 1 is a fragmentary elevational view of an unde-
ployed coil stent prior to its use in the invention;

Fig. 2 is a section view taken along the line II-II of
Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a fragmentary elevational view of the same
stent, following its deployment by expansion while
on a balloon catheter inside a body lumen shown in
phantom and in section, respectively; and

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary section view taken generally
along the line IV-IV of Fig. 3.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[0011] What follows is a description of the preferred
embodiments, wherein a single coil stent is provided
comprising certain preferred materials, and is deployed
in certain body lumens at certain preferred heating tem-
peratures and pressures while on a preferred deploying
instrument, i.e., a balloon catheter. In addition, the in-
vention is applicable regardless of the materials utilized,
how it is used in a living body, at what temperatures and
pressures it is deployed, and what the deploying instru-
ment is. It is also useful if multiple helix coils are used.

[0012] As shown in Fig. 1, the preferred construct for
use in this invention is a coil stent 10 formed by winding
a strand 12 about an axis 14 so that the coil has an un-
expanded outside diameter D_1 and an unexpanded in-
side diameter D_2 . Each loop "L" of the coil may, or may
not, contact the next adjacent loop.

[0013] As shown in Fig. 2, strand 12 has a thickness
"T" and comprises an interior portion 20 and an exterior
portion 22. Preferably, portion 20 is a sheath tightly ad-
hering to the interior portion. Most preferably, both por-
tions are biodegradable, biocompatible materials, and
particularly, biodegradable polymers such as polyes-
ters, discussed below.

[0014] Preferred examples for D_1 , D_2 and T are as fol-
lows:

D_1 = 1 mm to about 50 mm, most preferably about
5 mm to 8 mm for a urethral stent;

D_2 = 0.95 mm to about 48 mm, most preferably
about 3 mm to 6 mm for a urethral stent;

T = 0.025 mm to 2.0 mm, most preferably about 1
mm for a urethral stent.

Other examples are also useful, depending upon where-
in a living body the stent is to be deployed.

[0015] In accordance with one aspect of the invention,
portions 20 and 22 are selected so that the melting tem-
perature T_m of portion 20 greatly exceeds the temper-
ature used to deploy the stent, as well as the melting
temperature T_{me} of portion 22. Likewise, T_{me} is less than
the deployment temperature by an amount sufficient to
cause at least a portion and preferably all of portion 22
to melt upon deployment.

[0016] Thus, in accordance with another aspect of the
invention, the method of delivering and deploying the
stent 10, as depicted in Fig. 3, comprises wrapping it
around a deploying instrument 30, such as a balloon
catheter, while the coil still has outside diameter D_1 . The
stent and catheter are then deployed within a living
body, preferably within a lumen B, and the catheter is
heated to its deployment temperature T_D . Thereafter,
the catheter is expanded to the diameter D_4 , Fig. 3, and
stent 10 is forced to also expand so that its outer diam-
eter D_3 approximates the inside diameter of lumen B.
However, because T_D is greater than T_{me} and less than
 T_m , portion 22 of the coil has melted, but not portion 20.
By proper selection of a glass transition temperature T_g
for portion 20, that portion has softened, preferably.
Thereafter, while in the expanded state shown, Fig. 3,
the catheter and stent are cooled to body temperature
for the lumen, causing portion 22 to solidify, Fig. 4, to
fuse the coil with loops L in contact at their expanded
outside diameter D_3 , and an expanded inside diameter
 D_4 , Fig. 3.

[0017] A preferred temperature for the deployment
temperature T_D is from 45° C to 70° C. Most preferred
is 50° C to 55° C. A preferred pressure for expanding
the coil is from 1 Atm to 25 Atm pressure and most pre-
ferably, about 1 Atm to 10 Atm.

[0018] Following a cooling step, the pressure within
catheter 30 is released and the latter allowed to shrink,
so that it can be withdrawn from lumen B while leaving
stent 10 behind.

[0019] Representative examples of useful values of
 D_3 and D_4 include, for D_3 , from about 1.5 mm to about
75 mm, and D_4 from about 1.5 mm to about 70 mm, de-
pending in part, of course, on the thickness value of T.
When used in a urethra following treatment of benign
prostatic hyperplasia, D_3 is about 8 to 10 mm and D_4
about 6 to 8 mm.

[0020] Regarding the materials of portions 20 and 22,
most preferably portion 20 comprises a polyester select-
ed from the group consisting of stiff, rigid high T_g/T_m pol-
ymers, copolymers and blends of poly(lactide) and poly
(glycolide), while portion 22 comprises a polyester se-
lected from soft, flexible, low T_g/T_m polymers, copoly-
mers, and blends of poly(ϵ -caprolactone), and copoly-
mers and blends of poly(p-dioxanone) and poly(trimeth-
ylene carbonate). Highly preferred ratios of comono-
mers include, e.g., co-glycolide/lactide in ratios of (95:
5) to (5:95).

[0021] Additionally, either portion 20 or 22 can have
co-polymerized therewith, monomers selected from

portion 22 or 20, respectively.

[0022] Suitable lactone monomers from which such polymers are formed may be selected from the group consisting of glycolide, lactide (*l*, *d*, *dl*, *meso*), p-dioxanone, delta-valerolactone, beta-butyrolactone, epsilon-decalactone, 2,5-diketomorpholine, pivalolactone, alpha, alpha-diethylpropiolactone, ethylene carbonate, ethylene oxalate, 3-methyl-1, 4-dioxane-2, 5-dione, 3,3-diethyl-1, 4-dioxan-2, 5-dione, gamma-butyrolactone, 1,4-dioxepan-2-one, 1,5-dioxepan-2-one, 1,4-dioxan-2-one, 6,8-dioxabicyclooctane-7-one and combinations of two or more thereof. Preferred lactone monomers are selected from the group consisting of glycolide, lactide, trimethylene carbonate, epsilon-caprolactone and p-dioxanone.

[0023] Yet another alternative is to select portion 20 from an absorbable glass, non-absorbable polymers or ceramic fibers, or from a metal.

[0024] It is also possible to add agents such as barium sulfate to give radio opaqueness, or drugs for site specific delivery.

[0025] The above-noted preferred polymers for the interior and exterior portions preferably have the following significant properties, where T_g is the glass transition temperature and T_m is the melting temperature:

Polymer	$T_g(^{\circ}\text{C})$	$T_m(^{\circ}\text{C})$
poly(lactide)	65	190
poly(glycolide)	45	220
poly(epsilon-caprolactone)	-60	60
poly(p-dioxanone)	-10	110
poly(trimethylene carbonate)	-20 (??)	NA

[0026] To allow the interior or exterior polymers to be used as a drug delivery matrix, the polymer can be mixed with a therapeutic agent. The variety of different therapeutic agents which can be used in conjunction with the polymers of the present invention is vast. In general, therapeutic agents which may be administered via the pharmaceutical compositions of the invention include, without limitation: anti-infectives such as antibiotics and antiviral agents; analgesics and analgesic combinations; anorexics, antihelmintics; antiarthritics, anti-asthmatic agents; anticonvulsants; antidepressants; antidiuretic agents; anti-diarrheals; antihistamines; anti-inflammatory agents; antimigrain preparations; antinauseants; antineoplastics; antiparkinsonism drugs, antipruritics; antipsychotics; antipyretics, antispasmodics; anticholinergics; sympathomimetics; xanthine derivatives; cardiovascular preparations including calcium channel blockers and beta-blockers such as pindolol and antiarrhythmics; antihypertensives; diuretics; vasodilators including general coronary, peripheral and cerebral; central nervous system stimulants; cough and cold preparations, including decongestants; hormones

such as estradiol and other steroids, including corticosteroids; hypnotics; immunosuppressives; muscle relaxants; parasympatholytics; psychostimulants; sedatives; and tranquilizers; and naturally derived or genetically engineered proteins, polysaccharides, glycoproteins, lipoproteins, or thrombogenic and restenotic reducing agents.

[0027] Matrix formulations may be formulated by mixing one or more therapeutic agents with the polymer. The therapeutic agent, may be present as a liquid, a finely divided solid, or any other appropriate physical form. Typically, but optionally, the matrix will include one or more additives, such as diluents, carriers, excipients, stabilizers or the like.

[0028] The amount of therapeutic agent will depend on the particular drug being employed and medical condition being treated. Typically, the amount of drug represents about 0.001% to about 70%, more typically about 0.001% to about 50%, most typically about 0.001% to about 20% by weight of the matrix.

[0029] The quantity and type of polymer incorporated into the drug delivery matrix will vary depending on the release profile desired and the amount of drug employed. The product may contain blends of polymer to provide the required release profile or consistency to a given formulation.

[0030] Upon contact with body fluids, the polymer undergoes gradual degradation (mainly through hydrolysis) or dissolution under physiological conditions with concomitant release of the dispersed drug for a sustained or extended period.

[0031] Methods are known for forming a composite polymeric strand of two different polymers, for use herein. E.g., U.S. Patent No. 5,626,611 teaches a useful method of making a strand used in this invention by co-extruding the interior portion and exterior portion polymers. Alternatively, the interior portion polymer can be extruded and the resulting wire used to wire-coat the exterior portion polymer from a melt.

[0032] However the strand is formed, thereafter the strand is wrapped around a mandrel to form the coil shape of the device used in the present invention.

[0033] Because the deployment process of the present invention melts only the exterior portion, but not the interior portion, the process of the invention allows the device to conform to the desired shape (e.g., expanded to conform to the lumen of an artery), and still dramatically increase its resistance to compressive and hydrostatic loads. Yet, the device is highly flexible during delivery and deployment, a critical feature when there is a need to pass the stent through small tortuous arteries from a person's extremities.

[0034] Thus, the end use of the process is in placing stents, grafts, nerve guides, and anastomosis couplers. The most preferred device is a stent, most preferably a stent for urological applications.

[0035] The device of the present invention has the added capability over that of prior art tubular stents of

tissue in-growth control, since the level of coil fusion can be governed to provide a tube construct that is perforated and thus, impervious to cell proliferation. That is, the loops of the coil may be spaced apart for the perforated portion, and/or portions of the coil portion 20 can be uncoated with portion 22, leaving gaps in the meltable polymer otherwise used to solidify the loops together. The spacing of the loops, or the gaps in portion 22 are selected to be of sufficient amounts as to create the desired perforations. For some cases, tissue in-growth is imperative since some of the devices of the present invention such as cardiovascular stents and vascular grafts are utilized in the blood stream. Thus, it is advantageous that the device is endothelialized (i.e., perforated for tissue in-growth) to prevent particulates of the device from dislodging from the vessel wall and traveling to other parts of the body.

[0036] Conversely, for other uses of the present invention such as urethral stents, it is highly desirable that the device is a solid structure (i.e., completely fused coils as shown in Fig. 3) so that it breaks down and passes through the urethral tract in small particulates to prevent absorption from occurring in the vessel wall. This might be highly desirable for FDA approval, since it is possible for the device to discharge from the body in less than 30 days, eliminating the need for rigorous safety and efficacy studies.

[0037] Consequently, the tissue growth control and enhanced rigidity of the process of the present invention allows for a variety of needs to be met for a wide range of medical applications that would not otherwise be abated by the devices of the prior art. For example, there is a great need for such a device in stenting blood vessels or the urethra to open occlusions due to plaque build-up or to maintain patency following surgical procedures for, e.g., benign prostate hypertrophy. A construct, such as that of the present invention, that is flexible (i.e., a coil) during delivery, but rigid after deployment (i.e., a tube) and has the potential for controlled tissue growth, meets the needs for applications as broad in scope as arterial and urethral stents, grafts, and anastomotic couplers.

Examples

[0038] The following examples are illustrative of the principles and practice of this invention, although not limited thereto. Numerous additional embodiments within the scope and spirit of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art. The examples are for the in-situ thermally formed coil construct described above.

Example No. 1

[0039] A coil stent was prepared from the process described above, with an interior portion 20 of poly(lactide) and the exterior portion 22 of poly(caprolactone). The

dimensions, Figs. 1 and 2, were $D_1 = 6$ mm, $D_2 = 4$ mm, and $T = 1$ mm. The diameter of portion 20 was about 0.5 mm.

[0040] This coil was placed on a foley balloon catheter having an outside diameter of the same value as D_2 , and heated to 60° C. Thereafter, it was expanded using a pressure in the catheter of about 5 atmospheres, until diameter D_3 , Fig. 3, was about 8 mm. The catheter was cooled so that the coil became fused, and the pressure and then the catheter were removed. The coil was found to have resistances to the following compressive load F_c , Fig. 3:

$$F_c = 2.19 \text{ N/mm}$$

By comparison, F_c of this coil prior to expansion and fusion of the coils, was only 0.27 N/mm.

[0041] This established that the process of the invention has the dual advantage of deforming and fusing at its surface, which forms a tubular structure with excellent radial stiffness, while not deforming at its core so as to lose its function as a mechanical support to the wall of a body cavity. That is, the stiff interior portion 20 acts to control the rate of uncoiling and provides structural integrity and rigidity to the exterior portion 22 while it is being melted.

[0042] The invention disclosed herein may be practiced in the absence of any element which is not specifically disclosed herein.

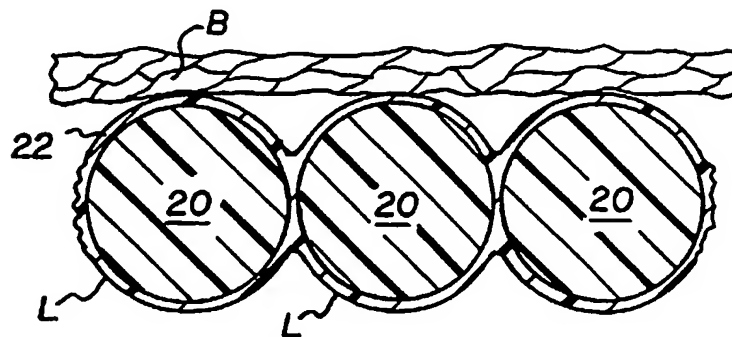
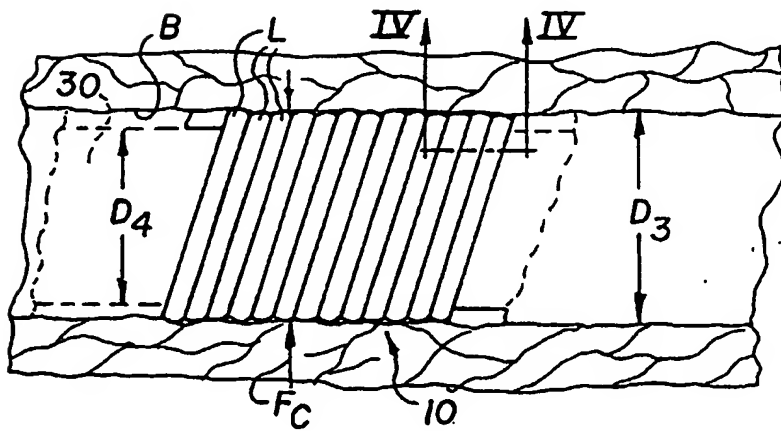
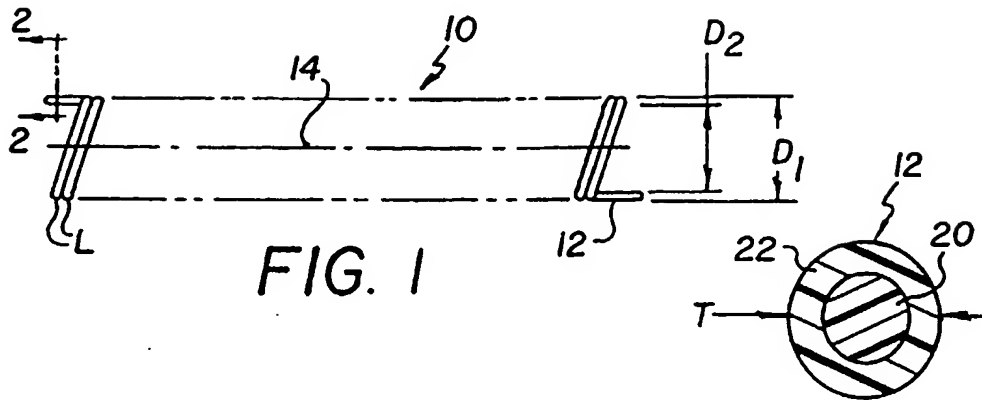
[0043] The invention has been described in detail with particular reference to preferred embodiments thereof, but it will be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A system for delivering and deploying a medical construct in a body cavity, comprising:

- a) a medical construct comprising a strand wound into a coil, said strand comprising an interior portion that has a melting temperature T_{m_i} and an exterior portion that comprises a biodegradable, biocompatible polymer having a melting temperature T_{m_e} , said melting temperatures being greater than body temperature; said coil having a longitudinal axis and an outside diameter less than that of the body cavity;
- b) means for inserting the medical construct into the body cavity and moving the medical construct to a deployment position with the cavity; and
- c) means for deploying the medical construct by heating it to a deployment temperature that exceeds T_{m_e} but not T_{m_i} so as to melt said ex-

- terior portion but not said interior, and for expanding said outside diameter radially until said diameter approximates the interior diameter of the body cavity and for allowing the deployed medical construct to cool while expanded, so that said outer portion, that has melted at said deployment temperature, fuses at least a portion of the coil together at the body cavity temperature at the expanded diameter, thereby increasing the coil's resistance to any shear forces applied to the coil parallel to said axis, and to compressive forces applied transversely to said axis.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein said entire strand comprises polymeric material, and said interior portion comprises a biodegradable, biocompatible plastic having a glass transition temperature T_g sufficient to allow expansion of said coil while heating at a deployment temperature but which resists bending at normal body cavity temperatures.
 3. The system of claim 1 or claim 2, wherein said construct is a stent mounted on a balloon catheter.
 4. The system of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said deployment temperature is between 50°C and 70°C, said T_m_i is at least 75°C, said T_m_o is less than 50°C and said T_g is about 65°C.
 5. The system of any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said means for expanding is adapted to apply pressure to the interior of said medical construct up to about 25 Atm.
 6. The system of any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein said interior portion comprises poly(lactide), poly(glycolide) or a copolymer or blend thereof.
 7. The system of any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein said exterior portion comprises poly(lactide), poly(glycolide), poly(ϵ -caprolactone), a copolymer or blend thereof, or a copolymer or blend of poly(p-dioxanone) and poly(trimethylene carbonate).
 8. A system for forming a tubular stent in situ in a body lumen, comprising:
 - a) means for inserting into the lumen a construct comprising a coil formed by wrapping a strand about an axis, said coil being narrower in diameter than the inside diameter of said lumen;
 - b) means for heating said coil to a temperature sufficient to melt only the outside surface of the strand but not the strand portion inside said surface;
 - c) means for expanding the coil while still at said temperature until its diameter approximates that of the lumen; whereby on cooling the coil so as to solidify the melted surface portion while the coil is expanded, the coil solidifies into a tube.
 9. The system of claim 8, wherein said means for heating is adapted to apply heat from the inside of the coil, outward.
 10. The system of claim 8 or claim 9, wherein said means for expanding is adapted to apply pressure from inside the coil, outward.





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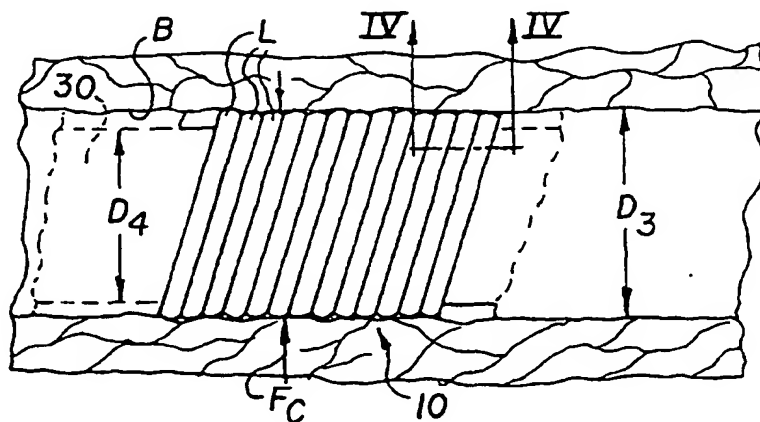


FIG. 3



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Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
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			A61F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 8 November 1999	Examiner Smith, C
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 98 31 0479

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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